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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Friday it will receive double the amount of money allocated last year to clean up the Great Lakes.

Funding in the budget for fiscal year 2006 for the Great Lakes Legacy Act will be \$50 million, the EPA said.

The announcement drew praise from U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park.

"Protecting our Great Lakes is critical to preserving our way of life and our children's environmental heritage," the congressman said. "The increased funding in the president's budget will help clean up many areas of concern on our Great Lakes, including my No. 1 priority, Waukegan Harbor."

Cleaning up the harbor, according to one estimate, adds more than \$800 million to Lake County property values and increase the value of a home in Waukegan by \$53,000. Kirk said redevelopment of the city's shoreline could bring more than \$1.2 billion in economic development.

"Waukegan's true economic potential lies in the environmental clean up of the harbor," he added.

Kirk said he is working with other Great Lakes congressmen on more comprehensive legislation addressing the basin's restoration, noting mercury pollution and invasive species are two of the issues.

"Pregnant women in Illinois now show tests with 14 times background mercury level in their

blood," he said. "We have a statewide fish advisory warning people to limit their consumption. The federal government cannot afford to put off action any longer. The time to act is now."